



Presented by





NATIONAL YOUTH ENTREPRENEURSHIP CHALLENGE

Wednesday, October 8, 2025

Supported by







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Thanks to the commitment of NFTE's national donors, an increasing number of young people are prepared with the entrepreneurial mindset and startup skills required to succeed in today's innovation economy.

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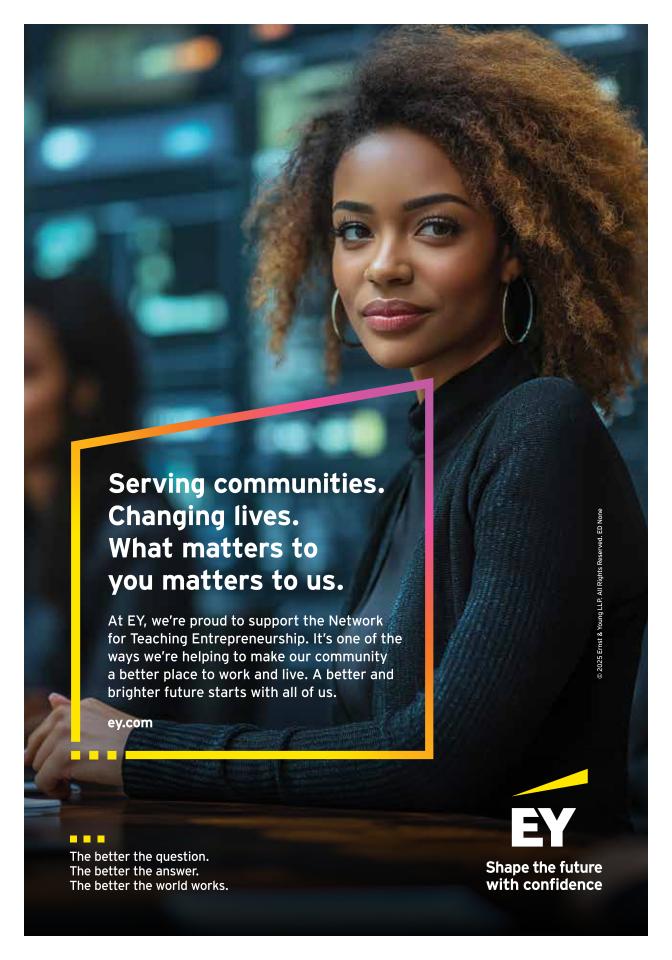
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Judges



David Alpago Partner **East Region Assurance Practice** EY

David Alpago is a partner in EY's East Region Assurance Practice with 19 years of accounting and auditing experience. He currently serves New York City-based technology and Growth Markets clients, ranging from large publicly traded entities to venture-backed start-ups.

Previously, David served as the firm's Technology Industry Resident in the National Accounting Professional Practice

Group where he worked closely with leadership in the firm's Global Technology Center (based in San Jose, CA).

David has extensive experience with revenue recognition arrangements, share-based compensation agreements, debt and equity financings, complex deal structures, IPOs and first-year SOX 404 implementations. His clients have included Peloton Interactive (IPO), IAC/ InterActiveCorp, Match Group, Inc. (IPO), ANGI Homeservices (reverse IPO), Yext (IPO) and Everyday Health (IPO).



VIP judges at the 2024 Challenge (c) Kristy Liebowitz



Judges, cont'd.



Michelle Armstrong Managing Director **Ares Management Corporation** President Ares Charitable Foundation

Michelle Armstrong is a Managing Director at Ares Management Corporation and President of the Ares Charitable Foundation, which envisions a world in which people have access to the knowledge, resources and opportunities needed to achieve their full potential and chart pathways to self-sufficiency.

Prior to joining Ares, Michelle led partner engagement and grantmaking at Project Management Institute for the PMI

Educational Foundation. Previously, she was a Vice President at Goldman Sachs, where she specialized in venture philanthropy and high-engagement giving. In addition, Michelle developed and executed strategies for aligned giving and involvement at MetLife for its foundation and corporate social responsibility initiatives.

Michelle serves as a Trustee of Wish of a Lifetime and Business Council for International Understanding. In addition, she is a member of The Economic Club of New York. She speaks regularly on the topics of philanthropy and economic equity and equality at conferences and convenings, including on behalf of the Milken Institute, The Conference Board and the UN Global Compact, and regularly writes for Fast Company as a subject matter expert.

Michelle holds an A.B. from Harvard University in anthropology, and an M.A. and MPhil from Teachers College, Columbia University in sociology and education, with a concentration in educational policy.



Empowering youth through entrepreneurial education to foster economic resilience and growth in a rapidly changing world.

We are inspired by these students' drive to make a positive impact and excited to see their solutions unfold in the real world. - Zuora

www.zuora.com



Judges, cont'd.



Ken Houseman Vice President of Product, Order to Cash Zuora

Ken Houseman is currently the Vice President of Product for Zuora's Order to Cash products. He has over 20 years of experience in industries that span the U.S. Department of Defense, Semiconductor Manufacturing, Telecommunications Equipment, Cloud Computing, Footwear/Apparel and Media.

Prior to his role at Zuora, Ken led the transformation of subscription systems at The New York Times as they grew beyond 10 million digital subscribers to become the digital news media leader. At Nike, he led teams that were responsible for the footwear giant's technical solutions in Order to Cash systems as they pivoted from wholesale to digital business focus. At Oracle, he was instrumental in leveraging technology and scaling global operations as they accelerated their cloud subscription business. His leadership drove the vision for multiple enterprise solutions that helped Oracle adapt into the recurring subscription business that it is today.

Prior to corporate life, Ken spent 4 years in the military as an Air Traffic Control and National Weather Service Radar electronics engineer. He's traveled the world and worked in over 25 different countries, bringing a truly global customer approach to his strategic vision and product management philosophy.

Your prosperity is our purpose.

Santander applauds Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship for making a real difference.



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Judges, cont'd.



Anthony Selvaggio
Head of New York and New
Jersey Middle Market and
Corporate Banking
Santander Bank, N.A.

Anthony Selvaggio is the Head of New York and New Jersey Middle Market and Corporate Banking at Santander, where he is responsible for expanding the Commercial Bank's client base and deepening relationships with existing clients across the New York/New Jersey region.

Prior to Santander, Anthony spent almost 20 years in various leadership positions at Citizens Bank, where he most recently

served as SVP and Commercial Market Executive for Metro NYC Corporate Banking. In this role, he was responsible for new client growth and managing a large portfolio of Corporate Banking relationships, in addition to driving market strategy and profitability.

Anthony earned his bachelor's degree in finance from St. Thomas Aquinas College.



Judges, cont'd.



Isis Swaby Founder & Creative Director Things Mag and **Rockers International** Records NFTE Class of 2008

Isis Swaby is a multi-hyphenate creative working across design, music, and culture. With a background in design, music marketing, and entrepreneurship, she has collaborated with Sonos, Kangol, the NY State Assembly, Lee "Scratch" Perry, Supreme, Rockers International Records, and VP Records. Through her entrepreneurial work with Rockers International

Records, Isis has contributed to preserving reggae history while building new platforms for cultural exchange.

As a DJ, interviewer, and radio host, Isis has contributed to NTS Radio (London), Dublab (Japan), Radio Raheem (Milan), and Balamii Radio (London). She has toured extensively across Europe, Asia, and the U.S., while also exhibiting artwork in New York and Japan. Her artist residencies include Governors Island (NYC), Costa Rica, and Chashama in Harlem, where she deepened her practice in painting, assemblage, and cultural storytelling.

Her collaborative projects span global and local platforms, including Kangol Headwear, VP Records, Soulection, ReggaeKing, Kinfolk 90, Aveda Asanda Soho, Brooklyn Bridge Park, Cross Club (Prague), DUBLAB JP (Tokyo), OPEN (Tokyo), Red Line Tap (Chicago), Sound Table (Atlanta), Lyons Wier Gallery, Kingston Dub Club (Jamaica), and UNIT (Tokyo). During a Japan and China tour, she completed a series of four large-scale paintings and curated Found Objects: Roots Files, an exhibition honoring Augustus Pablo in Kyoto.

Most recently, Isis launched Things Mag, an online magazine exploring culture, design, and sound. She is a proud alumna of the NFTE Class of 2008.

Master of Ceremonies



Anbessa Tiwoni
Wine & Spirits Sales Consultant
RNDC
NFTE Class of 2009

Anbessa Tiwoni's roots run deep with NFTE. Like many others, he started his entrepreneurial journey by joining a NFTE class at 14 years old, where he quickly discovered that his passion for finding solutions to problems he encountered was something NFTE could help him explore and build on. Anbessa's first business was We R Vegan, an interactive website designed to provide information about Vegan restaurant listings, healthy food, and products available in New York City, to sell vegan

themed T-shirts, and to provide a space for individuals to dialog through forums and share their knowledge through blogs. These days, Anbessa is stretching his entrepreneurial muscles as an engaged and entrepreneurial member of the sales team at RNDC. His connection to NFTE remains strong, and he's excited to be back onstage for a NFTE challenge!

We are pleased to support NFTE's efforts to help activate entrepreneurial mindsets through volunteerism.

We are proud of our employee volunteers who contribute their time and skills to advance NFTE's impact.



PayPal

Today's Judges and Timers

NFTE thanks our quarterfinal and semifinal round judges for volunteering their time, energy and expertise. The support, feedback, and suggestions they provide to our young entrepreneurs are generous gifts. Thanks also to the timekeepers who volunteered their time to ensure that judges' scores were correctly tabulated throughout the challenge.

Balwantee Ackiam, Citizens Bank

Fernanda Albanus, SAP

Valentina Arismendi, Adobe

Vanessa Bailey, Microsoft

Dan Baumgardt, Valley National Bank

Shashank Bhavaraju, EY

Casey Blake, Microsoft

Michael Blumenfeld, Mile Square Insurance

Agency

Jason Cahn, Valley National Bank (NFTE Mid-

Atlantic Board)

Camryn Carter, Goldman Sachs

Jeames Castillo, Citi

Fiona Chan, Citizens Bank

Mariatou Diallo, Citizens Bank

Surina Diddi

Michael Dileo, Santander/Chrylser

Jenny Drury, EY

Shreya Dubey, EY

Sidrah Durrani, SecondMuse

Keith Emmer, Startegix, LLC

Amber Flanagan, ASHCON Financial

Nile Fossett, Citi

Melanie Fox, Speech Fox

Mariana Gallucci, EY

Natalie Greaves, Greaves Communication

Strategies

Michiko Hiranuma, Citi

Lawrence Jacobs, Innova Capital Partners

Naman Jain, EY

Lela Jgerenaia, SER Capital Partners

Jessie Jones, Red Lantern Consulting

Nupur Joshi, Bridgewater Associates

Graeme Kavanagh, Accelerate

Ryder Kessler, Abundance NY

Elan Lantsman, Valley National Bank

Shania Lloyd, Valley National Bank

Marissa Mack, Webster Bank (NFTE Mid-Atlantic

Board)

Akash Miharia, Adobe

Disha Mirchandani, Citi

Elise Mochizuki, EY

Alisha Nabila, EY

Swapnil Narlawar, UBS

Haoran Piao, EY

Jasmine Rodriguez, Microsoft (NFTE Alumna)

Raisa Rosa, Citizens Bank

Veronica Roussos, Valley National Bank

Genevieve Santos-Bann, Santos Worldwide Group,

LLC (NFTE Alumna)

Tania Shoma, Valley National Bank

James Sierra, Santander

Vashawn Simmons, Citizens Bank Heidi Solomon-Orlick, GirlzWhoSell

Anamika Srivastava, US Bank

Judy Stewart, Retired (NFTE Mid-Atlantic Board)

Esperanza Straughter, Citizens Bank

Mark Tang, EY

Tom Tang, Cathay Bank

Ekow Thomas, Honor
Riley Tomek, Citi
Jack Tran, American Express
Sophie Tsanang, Adobe
Yingshui (Alina) Wang, EY
Amanda Wiss, Urban Clarity
Alexis Zhao, Valley National Bank

(list incomplete at time of printing)



Get Involved

Learn more about NFTE

Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship (NFTE) ignites the entrepreneurial mindset with unique learning experiences that empower students to own their futures. A global nonprofit founded in 1987, NFTE provides high-quality entrepreneurship education to middle school, high school, and postsecondary students.

NFTE provides students with opportunities to build skills, confidence, and know-how to recognize opportunities, discover their passions, develop their talents, and grow their networks. Young people who complete NFTE's entrepreneurship programs are more likely to engage in learning, achieve their educational and career goals, launch businesses, have increased lifetime earnings, and feel greater job satisfaction. NFTE brings the power of entrepreneurship to students, regardless of family income, community resources, special needs, gender identity, race, or ethnicity.

NFTE has educated more than a million students, delivering our programs in school, out of school, in-person, online, or through hybrid models. Visit www.nfte.com to learn more.

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Inclusive Innovator Award

The Inclusive Innovator Award has been made possible through a generous grant from the MetLife Foundation. This award celebrates the spirit of innovation and inclusion that drives social change and economic opportunity for all, and the



perseverance, grit and fortitude required to face a significant health challenge or physical disability. Awardees have created an accessibility-focused business idea that aims to improve the lives of people with disabilities, and/or fully embraced the entrepreneurial mindset while facing a significant physical or health-related challenge.



Joshua Mallory (he/him)
NFTE Class of 2025
EasyFit
Elgin, IL

Joshua Mallory will tell you that the inspiration for Easy Fit comes from his own personal story. He was born with Arthrogryposis Multiplex Congenita, also known as AMC, a condition which causes two or more joint contractures at birth. This condition has caused a weakening of Joshua's upper body, limiting his ability to use buttons on shirts, pants, and other pieces

of clothing. Inspired to find a solution, Joshua created Easy Fit, which will produce shirts that use magnetic buttons, creating accessible clothing for himself and for others who face similar difficulties.

Joshua's deep personal experience of what it means to be dependent on others for simple things has led him to create an innovative business that is designed to give people a degree of freedom and independence they wouldn't otherwise have. Easy Fit will produce a wide array of designs to combine fashion with basic daily practicality in every piece of clothing.

Joshua says he has learned many things from NFTE. He has coined a saying based on all the advice he was given: "It's not the product you are selling, it is yourself you are selling." This concept has changed the way he looks at businesses around his city and at how and what they sell. He says he has learned to look more closely at the person or people behind the business, rather than just at the business itself.

Competitors

Jadiel Gonzalez (he/him) and Analia Villegas Negron (she/her), 16 A&J Training, Kissimmee, FL



Jadiel and Analia co-founded A&J Training to offer athletes something rare—personalized training that prioritizes both physical performance and mental well-being. Combining tailored athletic programs with nutritional plans, they help clients build lasting healthy habits while avoiding some harmful shortcuts the two founders both experienced firsthand in their own sports journeys. By focusing on long-term health, happiness, and accessibility, they aim to "Keep believing in your business"

inspire other young athletes, keeping kids engaged in positive activities, and your potential. Even if it fails, and equipping them with the tools to overcome life's obstacles.

stronger—and never give up."

Christina Dolkar (she/her) and Chrisbel Martinez (she/her), 17 Athletic Unity, Queens, NY



Christina and Chrisbel know firsthand how much confidence can be tied to what athletes wear. Growing up, they noticed how underfunded schools often had lower-quality uniforms—leaving players feeling defeated before games even began. For girls especially, poorly designed gear often led to discomfort, insecurity, and even dropping out of sports altogether. That's why they founded Athletic Unity, a company dedicated to providing stylish, well-fitting uniforms at prices schools can afford. Their mission is

simple: help athletes feel proud in what they wear so they can focus on the "As long as you're passionate and game, not their insecurities. Christina and Chrisbel believe that when athletes driven to bring change, greatness look and feel good, they play with confidence, proving that proper attire can will follow." truly transform both performance and self-belief.

Payton Bonino (she/her), 17 Bella, Ormond Beach, FL



Using her own experience as inspiration, Payton founded Bella to give people with metal allergies a stylish, affordable option for jewelry-something she struggled to find herself due to a severe nickel allergy. Using nickel- and lead-free hypoallergenic materials, Bella creates comfortable, customizable

necklaces for people who want to wear beautiful jewelry without risking skin irritation or breaking the bank. Living with Ménière's disease and mild to

moderate hearing loss, Payton channels her personal challenges into creating a brand that's both meaningful and empowering.

Rieden Harlow-Rivas (he/him) and Yianni Nikolaou (he/him), 17 Birdies N' Bass, Ipswich, MA



Yianni Nikolaou and Rieden Harlow-Rivas turned a simple classroom question—"What do you both like?"—into Birdies N' Bass, the first product to combine a golf club and fishing rod. With Yianni's love for fishing and Rieden's passion for golf, they created a way to enjoy both sports at once, while giving people more value for their time and money. In a world where participation in both golf and fishing has been on the decline, Birdies N' Bass brings fresh excitement to two traditional pastimes. Beyond innovation, Yianni and Rieden are committed to accessibility, partnering

with charitable programs like First Tee to give more people the chance to experience golf. Their philosophy: no idea is too small—success comes from how you bring it to life.

Paige Dickensheets (she/her) and Mariana Phipps (she/her), 13 Blysse, Baltimore, MD



Paige and Mariana love wearing perfume, but after experiencing coughing fits whenever they sprayed it, they began to question what they were putting on their skin. Learning how much worse chemical-based perfumes can be for people with asthma, sensitive skin, or allergies, they created Blysse—a fragrance made entirely from "No idea is ever too stupid or natural ingredients, safe for everyone

small for you to follow. Believe to enjoy. Their mission is simple: make in yourself and you can achieve perfume accessible without sacrificing anything, even things that seem

beauty, while helping people feel more confident in their own skin.

KyMani Otano-Charity (he/him) and Elijah Parker (he/him), 13



Carry Confidence, Baltimore, MD

KyMani and Elijah founded Carry Confidence to help people express who they are—without saying a word. Their custom bags are designed for introverts who may struggle to share their personality in social settings, as well as extroverts who love to showcase their individuality. With personalized touches like stickers, patches, colors, and names, each bag becomes a reflection of its owner. Carry Confidence makes selfexpression affordable and completely customizable. Inspired by people

close to them, including Elijah's sister, they hope their business encourages others to step outside their comfort zones. Their long-term vision is to expand "If you have an idea you think may into clothing and online platforms, letting customers carry their confidence in be weird, still go for it." more ways, everywhere they go.

Isaac Estrada (he/him) and Gael Jimenez (he/him), 17 Chef Dash, Dallas, TX



Gael and Isaac created Chef Dash, an app that makes hiring a private chef as simple as a few clicks. Designed with an intuitive interface and a vetted network of chefs, Chef Dash ensures clients can easily book trusted professionals for any occasion—while chefs gain valuable opportunities for work. The idea was sparked during a family gathering with a private chef, where Gael and Isaac realized how difficult it is for chefs to find jobs after graduating, and how challenging it can be for people to access

culinary talent. Chef Dash bridges that gap, providing customers with delicious "With infinite ideas out there, at experiences and even recipe-learning opportunities while empowering chefs least one can make you succeed. with steady employment. Their mission is clear: create a platform where great Don't be afraid to take small steps food meets opportunity, confidence, and community.

Kamsi Dukes (she/her), 13, and Aaira Masood (she/her), 12 Child Guardian, Grand Prairie, TX



After noticing that incidents of bullying at their school often took a long time to be reported to teachers or administrators, Kamsi and Aaira cofounded Child Guardian to give bullied students a way to get help in real time. Their innovative watches, designed to be worn throughout the school day, feature a double-click alert button that notifies the nearest teacher's phone and includes voice recording for further support. By enabling instant communication and rapid

response, they aim to deter bullying and make schools safer for every student. In addition to their passion for entrepreneurship, both Kamsi and Aaira are involved in many other hobbies and school activities, including doing robotics, trusted adults." coding, and playing basketball, among others.

Kevin Navarro (he/him), 18 Choose Bake Now, Dallas, TX



Kevin Navarro founded Choose Bake Now with one simple goal: make sure no one has to miss out on a cake because of timing. His service guarantees same-day or nextday readiness, offering homemade cakes that never come from a store shelf. Whether it's a forgotten birthday, a last-minute party, or a sold-out favorite, Choose Bake Now ensures customers can get the cake they need, right when they need it. With plenty of batter and icing always prepped, Kevin can handle

What started as a school project quickly grew into a business idea rooted in convenience and care—helping busy people enjoy life's sweet moments without the stress of planning ahead.

anything from a single order to multiple cakes at once.

Alisson Soto-Batista (she/her), 15 Clarity, Miami, FL



Alisson Soto-Batista founded Clarity, a peer counseling workshop created to support students in understanding and embracing their mental health. With trained peer counselors guided by professionals, Clarity provides a safe space where students can share their struggles and grow positively through connection and support. Alisson's inspiration came from her own journey-after being referred to a mental health associate, she discovered she was dealing with anxiety, ADHD, and attachment issues.

she wanted to extend that same sense of relief and empowerment to others. Clarity's mission is simple: help students accept their mental health, find strength in community, and move forward with confidence. Alisson hopes to continue this work by studying Psychology in college.

Talking openly helped her realize she wasn't alone, and

Adrian Bautista (he/him), 18, and Evan Perez (he/him), 17 Color Your Life, Providence, RI



Evan and Adrian created Color Your Life to help families reconnect in a world dominated by screens. Inspired by Evan's time as a teacher's assistant and as a big brother to 6-year-old twins, they saw firsthand how devices can pull children away from real life. Their business transforms real family photos into personalized coloring books, using Al to turn memories into creative, hands-on experiences that reduce screen time while strengthening family bonds. Evan notes that the families who need alternatives for their children the most "Put the phone down. Invest in

are often low-income, living where resources are limited and screens are your mind, your body, and your everywhere. Color Your Life creates an accessible, joyful alternative, helping spirit—and make space for what families reconnect, not just reset.

Adrian Romero-Ubieda (he/him), 12 Designed Organic Grooming (D.O.G.), Miami, FL



Adrian Romero-Ubieda founded Designed Organic Grooming (D.O.G.) with one goal: to give pet owners products they can truly trust. Many brands labeled "natural" still hide chemicals that cause dryness, rashes, and irritation in pets. After seeing his own dog suffer from treatment with harsh ingredients, Adrian set out to create safe, transparent grooming products made only from natural ingredients. Every formula is clearly labeled, free from hidden additives, and designed for sensitive pets and families. With D.O.G., caring for your pet means peace of mind and healthier, happier

animals. Adrian's vision is to change the way families approach pet care, one safe product at a time. He has big plans for the future, and has been dreaming since he was in the fourth grade about someday attending MIT's Sloan School with a masters in Finance.

Joshua Mallory (he/him), 15 Easy Fit, Elgin, IL



Joshua knows firsthand the frustration of struggling with traditional shirt buttons—a challenge he's faced his entire life due to Arthrogryposis Multiplex Congenita, also known as AMC, a condition which causes two or more joint contractures at birth.

To help himself and others with upper body limitations, he founded Easy Fit, a clothing brand that will replace traditional buttons with innovative magnetic closures. By partnering with manufacturers to create stylish,

accessible shirts, Joshua aims to give people greater independence and confidence in what they wear. Joshua is a dedicated music enthusiast, and says listening to good music helps focus his mind in many ways, including creating his business idea.

reasons why you cannot do remember there are also many your heart, use your skills, and remember the dream."

Dorian Guzman-Lora (he/him), 18 **Energize, Bronx, NY**



Dorian's business idea is Energize, a website that uses video games to spark interest in engineering and STEM. With each game focused on a different discipline, Energize helps players build real skills and even create project portfolios to strengthen their future career opportunities. Unlike traditional courses that can feel rigid, Energize introduces concepts through interactive, project-based gameplay—making learning both engaging and practical. Inspired by the excitement he once felt playing math games, Dorian wanted to create the same spark for engineering, a field that often

feels intimidating or inaccessible. With the U.S. facing a major STEM shortage, Energize is designed to bridge the gap between high school and college, motivating students to pursue and complete STEM careers. Dorian hopes to continue this mission while studying engineering at City College of New York.

Dayneris Rodriguez (she/her) and Rachel Soto (she/her), 15 **Eternal Fantasy, Springfield, MA**



Eternal Fantasy is Dayneris and Rachel's business that creates handcrafted ribbon bouquet arrangements as a sustainable alternative to fresh flowers. Designed for people who love the beauty of flowers but don't have time to care for them, these ribbon bouquets are customizable, eco-friendly, and long-lasting—no watering or waste required. Inspired by wanting to give their moms a unique Mother's Day gift, Dayneris and Rachel discovered the beauty and sustainability of ribbon flowers and decided to share

them with their community. Eternal Fantasy not only offers low-maintenance floral arrangements but also raises awareness in their community about the environmental impact of traditional flower displays.

perfect for your business, but you

Taylor Rosa (she/her), 18 Game Swap, Piscataway, NJ



Taylor is the creator of Game Swap, a peer-to-peer platform that lets gamers swap, trade, and rent video games with one another. Designed to tackle the high cost of gaming, low trade-in values, and the environmental impact of mass production, Game Swap gives players the power to set their own terms and get more value from the games they already own. Unlike traditional resale models, this system puts control directly into the hands of the community-making gaming more affordable, flexible, and sustainable. Inspired by her father's lifelong passion

for video games and her own experience finding comfort in gaming during difficult times, Taylor built Game Swap to provide not only access but also connection. Her mission is simple: make gaming accessible, enjoyable, and community-driven for everyone.

Prince Amankwaa (he/him), 17 Goal House, Columbus, OH



Prince is the proud founder of Goal House, an affordable soccer camp bringing elite training and mentorship to youth in underserved communities. Blending bilingual support, mentors, family-like bonds, and a percentage of profits donated to children's homes, Goal House makes every practice a way to give back. Inspired by his childhood in Ghana—where soccer was free, joyful, and accessible—Prince saw the lack of affordable opportunities in the U.S. and set out to

safe, supportive environment for low-income families. A varsity soccer player and bilingual leader, Prince plans to study medicine and become a pediatric doctor after college.

into unfamiliar territory. In losing—only learning."

Jessica Zanchi (she/her), 17 **Groundlevel, Holliston, MA**



Jessica, a Programming & Web Development student with a passion for gaming, noticed that while accessibility features are growing in web design, they remain scarce in video games. She founded Groundlevel to provide hands-on consultation services for game companies seeking to implement accessible technology in their titles. With unmatched trade knowledge, scalable solutions, and a drive to serve the underserved

disabled gaming community, Jessica is working to make digital entertainment truly inclusive. Not one to

change that. His program offers high-level training in a

simply sit in front of a screen all day, Jessica runs track and is on her high school's soccer team. She's certain that with virtually no direct competition in her market, she and Groundlevel are sure to make an impact on the gaming community.

market and your customer base."

Julian Bernal Saenz (he/him), and Manuel Vides Ben (he/him), 18 Halo Technologies, Winter Garden, FL



Halo Technologies is creating the world's first Al-driven crash prevention software, using real-time sensor algorithms and cutting-edge technology to stop road collisions before they happen. The idea came after Julian survived two serious car accidents, inspiring him and Manuel to design a solution that could save millions of lives worldwide. With numerous certifications in Al bootcamps, Julian is now studying business law at the Univeristy of Central Florida, while Manuel is pursuing his entrepreneurial mindest full time by

continuing to explore new business ideas while taking some targeted courses to continue expanding his skills. Both are Entrepreneurship and Small Business certified.

fail. Every failure is a step closer

Jonathan Campos (he/him), 17 JC Productions, Dallas, TX



Jonathan Campos founded JC Productions to make high-quality aerial cinematography accessible, creative, and safe for everyone—from filmmakers to real estate agents and event planners. Many businesses struggle with the high costs and technical challenges of drone footage, but JC Productions solves this with FAA-certified pilots, industryleading equipment, and a personalized approach that larger companies often lack. Jonathan's love for filmmaking started young, but it wasn't until an entrepreneurship class introduced him to NFTE that he realized he could turn his passion into a real

business. Today, JC Productions not only delivers cinematic visuals but also "Stay curious, take risks, and gives back, offering discounts to nonprofits and planning scholarships to help youth explore drone technology. Jonathan hopes to expand into a full-scale believe in your vision, even when media company while also pursuing aviation at Embry-Riddle Aeronautical it's just an idea." University.

surround yourself with people who

Brandom Guzman-Lora (he/him), 18 Kimberlite AP, Bronx, NY



Brandom Guzman-Lora created Kimberlite AP, an Al-powered learning platform designed to help high school students succeed on Advanced Placement exams. By analyzing weak spots, offering personalized study tools, and connecting students with 1-on-1 tutors, Kimberlite AP addresses the challenges of low passing rates, ineffective study methods, and limited resources. Unlike generic test-prep platforms, it mirrors AP scoring rubrics to show exactly where points are lost, giving students clear guidance on how to improve. Inspired by his own struggles with

AP exams despite strong grades, Brandom wanted to build a solution that saves time, reduces financial barriers, and boosts confidence for students like him. His vision is to level the playing field in education while inspiring new hybrid learning models that combine AI precision with human support.

likely fail, but the skills you develop

Lexi Hoffman (she/her), 14 Lexi's Sweet Treats, Dallas, TX



Lexi's Sweet Treats was born out of love and a determination to make cookies everyone can enjoy. Inspired by her Aunt Sharon, who is lactose intolerant and often left out at family gatherings, Lexi created a dairy-free recipe that tastes just as delicious as traditional cookies. Today, Lexi's Sweet Treats offers both dairy-free and regular cookies in a variety of flavors, ensuring no one feels excluded when it comes to enjoying a favorite treat. Beyond baking, Lexi is an accomplished swimmer and dreams of attending NYU to study biology, with hopes of becoming a pediatrician

or orthopedic surgeon. Adopted from China at age 4, Lexi quickly learned English and now proudly balances her passions for science, swimming, and entrepreneurship.

Work hard and it will pay off."

J Malagon (he/him), 16, and Raul Torres, Jr. (he/him), 15 LittleLand Living, Dallas, TX



LittleLand Living is tackling the housing crisis with innovative, affordable solutions. The business transforms underutilized land into incomegenerating spaces by designing, building, and customizing tiny homes tailored to each client's needs. Beyond construction, LittleLand Living reimagines the surrounding land to maximize functionality and comfort. With guidance from Price Career Institute, they collaborate with skilled professionals in construction, plumbing, and electrical trades to ensure

quality results. The idea began when J presented a tiny home concept in their entrepreneurship class and Raul, who grew up around job sites with his father, immediately saw its potential. For them, this work is personal: gentrification displaced Raul's own family. Their mission is clear—LittleLand Living provides practical, affordable has and chase it." housing that helps people remain in the communities they love.

Ashlee Lewis (she/her), 17 Lockin, Sunrise, FL



Ashlee is the founder of Lockln, an innovative platform designed to tackle the growing attention span crisis among college students and young professionals. By using Al to create personalized, visual daily challenges, LockIn helps users strengthen focus in classrooms, lectures, and work environments. Unlike traditional therapy settings, the app removes stigma and judgment, encouraging users to be honest about their struggles and receive accurate, customized training. Inspired by her own experiences and those of friends who struggle to focus, whether

diagnosed with ADHD or not-Ashlee wanted to create a tool for anyone seeking better concentration. With future plans to adopt eco-friendly molten salt cooling for its servers, Lockln aims not only to improve individual focus and academic success but also to support a healthier, more sustainable world.

'Never give up on an idea just yes that changes your future."

Chase Little (he/him), and Michael Scanlon (he/him), 15 MC Marine, Tampa, FL



Michael Scanlon and Chase Little founded MC Marine to make boat maintenance simple, fast, and stress-free. Their Flush King system is wired directly into a boat, providing an easy solution for flushing outboard motors and washing down the inside hull after long days on the water. Inspired by countless hours spent cleaning boats with his grandfather after fishing trips, Michael realized there had to be a better "If you are given a dream, give it way-and together with Chase, he set out everything you have and network to design one. MC Marine's Flush King saves with everyone you can. You never

boaters valuable time and energy, so they can focus on what they love most: know where it might take you in being out on the water. Their mission is clear-take the hassle out of boat life." upkeep and give customers more freedom to enjoy their adventures.

Andre Cheng (he/him), 14 Mindi, Los Angeles, CA



Andre Cheng created Mindi, an Al therapy app designed to provide an accessible and anonymous space for emotional support. With three unique modes-Vent Buddy for casual conversations, Mature Mentor for balanced guidance, and Cognitive Companion for deeper, research-based techniques-Mindi adapts to users' different emotional needs and moods. Inspired by his own struggles with mental health and the stigma that kept him from seeking professional help, Andre wanted to design a safe, low-pressure alternative for those who face barriers like cost, access, "Build an idea ground something

or fear of judgment. By normalizing conversations around mental health, Mindi you are passionate about. These aims to reduce stigma and make support more widely available. Andre plans ideas are the ones you will be able to continue developing Mindi while exploring his passions in art, music, and to have an inside perspective on volleyball, with future goals of studying at USC.

Lychee Li (she/her), 15 Mischee Film, Diamond Bar, CA



Mischee Film was created to change how true crime stories are told. Too often, these narratives oversimplify events-portraying victims as purely innocent and criminals as entirely evil-while relying on actors with no lived experience. Mischee Film takes a different approach by inviting real-life victims and offenders to reenact their own stories, sharing authentic perspectives and emotions. To protect participants, guardians' consent is required and victims and offenders never meet. Founder Lychee draws on her experiences in the Claremont Police

Explorer Program and Fontana Police Academy, where she learned firsthand about the challenges faced by officers, victims, and offenders. An awardwinning actress, dancer, and artist, Lychee brings passion and purpose to her and enrich your life experience." work, aiming to educate, build empathy, and inspire safer communities.

in yourself to achieve beyond

Miriama Ferrad (she/her), 19 Naima Bouquets, Kissimmee, FL



Miriama founded Naima Bouquets to bring elegance, artistry, and heartfelt meaning into every floral arrangement. Specializing in handcrafted designs for any occasion from romantic gestures to formal events—Naima Bouquets offers a personal touch that mass-produced flowers simply can't match. Miriama was inspired when a simple bouquet she made brightened her ill mother's day, showing her the power flowers have to uplift spirits and connect people. Her mission is to make flowers more than just a luxury for special occasions, but a way to

celebrate everyday life and rekindle joy and romance in all its forms. Now "If you don't have beauty, you studying business management and entrepreneurship at Valencia, Miriama have nothing." is determined to grow Naima Bouquets while continuing to share beauty, connection, and intention through her craft.

Marian Natividad (she/her), 15 Nativimix, San Jose, CA



Growing up, Marian looked forward to gatherings where someone brought a bag of Hawaiian Chex Mix to share. It was more than just a snack — it was a way to connect. Marian started Nativimix to share that piece of her culture with others. Nativimix solves the problem of boring, generic snack mixes by offering a flavorful, Hawaiian-inspired Chex Mix not available in most stores. Nativimix uses a special sweet and savory blend inspired by authentic Hawaiian flavors and traditions,

made fresh in small batches. Nativimix is shareable

and perfect for gifting or snacking. Through Nativimix, Miarian wants to give back by supporting nonprofits that protect the environment in Hawaii and the Philippines. Marian plans to become a nurse practitioner, blending her love for healthcare with entrepreneurship.

Raymond Cheung Wu (he/him), and Cicily Yu (she/her), 17 NatureHue, San Francisco, CA



NatureHue was founded to create a safer, eco-friendly alternative to traditional markers. Disturbed by the strong odors and harmful chemicals in standard markers, Cicily and Raymond set out to design markers that are non-toxic, odorless, and made from natural, biodegradable ingredients. NatureHue not only protects users—especially children—from harmful chemicals like xylene and toluene—but also reduces plastic waste, helping address the 13 billion metric tons of plastic polluting our oceans. Their markers use sustainable materials, including locally sourced ingredients

and recycled cardboard casings, and the company plans to donate products to local schools. NatureHue empowers artists, teachers, and students to create safely and sustainably, "No idea is terrible—it just needs combining high-quality performance with environmental responsibility to protect our health, communities, and planet.

Amrita Ricknauth (she/her), 15 OilMist, Yonkers, NY



OilMist was created to help people care for their hair while boosting confidence. Observing friends and peers with hair damage—from braids without protective styles, heat damage, or frizz—Amrita wanted to create a simple, effective solution for both women and men. OilMist provides nourishing vitamins directly to the hair roots, supporting healthy growth and restoration for those experiencing hair loss, including cancer survivors. By reducing the number of products needed, OilMist makes hair care easier, more efficient, and empowering. Beyond

her business, Amrita is a volleyball player, artist, and avid reader who enjoys connecting with others and maintaining a positive mindset. Through OilMist, she combines her passion for wellness and creativity to help people feel confidence is key." confident, healthy, and proud of their hair.

Put your all into what you want

Briley Goble (she/her), 14 Pawable Adaptive Pet Products, Lutz, FL



Pawable Adaptive Pet Products was created to make pet care safe and accessible for everyone. Inspired by her mother's work with clients who have mobility limitations, Briley learned of a woman who had to consider giving up her cat after falling and breaking her hip while feeding it. Determined to find a solution, Briley designed an adaptive pet bowl that allows individuals to feed and water their pets without bending over, reducing the risk

safely to ground level or can be easily picked up for soft food or cleaning. and people who knock you down, Beyond improving safety, Pawable helps more pets stay in loving homes. Briley but when you truly believe in the is an ESB-certified 8th grader and NJHS member, combining entrepreneurship product you are marketing, it will and compassion to make a meaningful impact.

you are passionate about...there of falls. The lightweight, funneled system delivers food will be obstacles that set you back be easy to stay on track."

Jazlyn Ramirez (she/her), 16 Paws and Claws, Annandale, VA



Paws and Claws was founded to provide affordable, trustworthy, all-in-one pet care for local pet owners. Inspired by Jazlyn's rescue puppy, Harley, she witnessed firsthand how gentle, consistent care builds trust and confidence in animals. Paws and Claws offers grooming, training, and boarding services at accessible prices, with a team that is passionate, reliable, and responsive to customer needs. Jazlyn's business emphasizes inclusivity and strong community connections, ensuring pets and their owners feel valued and supported. A junior at Falls Church High

School, Jazlyn has taken three business courses and participates in cross country, track, and multiple clubs, demonstrating her drive, leadership, and you know, and be confident in commitment to excellence. Guided by a love for animals and a mission to make a difference, Jazlyn combines compassion with entrepreneurship to benefit both pets and her community.

crucial for success!"

Aadish Kachhal (he/him), 18 PoliSight, Weston, FL



Aadish Kachhal founded PoliSight, a data analytics platform designed to help political offices better understand and engage with upcoming Gen Z voters. By using modern data collection techniques, PoliSight provides district-specific insights on a customizable dashboard, giving campaigns the tools to make faster, smarter decisions that boost youth voter turnout. Aadish was inspired by his own experience as a high school student—approaching voting age but never asked about his political views or encouraged to register. Drawing on his background in speech and debate, he set out

to address one of the nation's biggest challenges: motivating young people to "Take any and all advice participate in democracy. Through its nonprofit arm, PoliTeen, PoliSight also from your mentors and other promotes civic education with polls, service projects, and unbiased media entrepreneurs who can help teach coverage. Aadish is studying business economics and public policy at Wharton you how to sell yourself and your to further this mission.

My'Ye Mitchell (she/her), 16 Rise and Thrive Network, St. Louis, MO



My'Ye founded Rise and Thrive Network, a nonprofit dedicated to supporting singleparent families with emotional, financial, academic, and community resources. Unlike programs that focus only on one area, Rise & Thrive takes a holistic approach, celebrating families' progress and ensuring they have the tools to not just survive but truly thrive. Inspired by her own upbringing in a single-parent household, My'Ye witnessed firsthand the sacrifices parents make and realized that these families don't lack love—they lack support. Rise & Thrive aims to fill

that gap, offering encouragement, opportunity, and connection to those who "Don't give up and if you put in the often feel alone. Currently interning at a daycare, My'Ye plans to pursue a work then you will definitely see an nursing degree while building her nonprofit to empower families like her own.

Yanisbel Ortiz (she/her), 16 Scented Escape, Brookhaven, GA



Scented Escape provides affordable, high-end fragrance samples in customizable kits, offering convenience and variety for personal use or gifting. Frustrated by the high cost and risk of buying full-sized perfumes that may not match their preferences, Yanisbel created a solution that allows customers to select any six samples, enabling them to explore new scents without overspending. Passionate about hygiene and fragrance, she combines her love for perfumes with a practical approach, helping people discover their favorite scents while saving time and money. Scented Escape empowers

customers to experiment confidently, whether trying something bold or staying within their comfort zone. Beyond fragrance, Yanisbel is interested in organization and interior design, blending creativity with entrepreneurship to the advantage you need." provide high-quality, accessible experiences for her community.

Arlo John Pangilinan (he/him), 17 ScholarSync, Fort Washington, MD



ScholarSync provides personalized digital planners and virtual consultations designed to help high school students manage academics, extracurriculars, and personal life with less stress. Using platforms like Notion and Zoom, ScholarSync creates fully customized time management systems, including schedules, routines, and one-onone optimization sessions with ongoing support. Inspired by his own experience as a student, Arlo John recognized that other teens often struggle to balance rigorous coursework and personal goals. ScholarSync empowers students in Prince George's

County to take control of their schedules, reduce anxiety, and improve productivity through tailored digital solutions. Arlo John envisions scaling ScholarSync globally to combine empathy with innovation, helping students worldwide achieve academic success while maintaining their mental health and balance.

set realistic goals, stay grounded, and master time management."

Adveka Mani (she/her), 14 Sleek & Shine, Lithia, FL



Adveka is the creator of Sleek & Shine, an innovative hairbrush designed to simplify hair care while promoting growth for all hair types. The brush features three versatile attachments—a scalp massager, boar bristle brush, and bamboo detangler—and can even dispense hair products directly, combining convenience with technology. Inspired by her mother's struggles with managing thick, curly hair, Adveka created a solution that empowers women to feel confident while saving time and reducing product waste. Beyond the product, Sleek & Shine makes a positive impact through workshops,

community engagement, and programs providing brushes and haircare tools to shelters and aspiring hairstylists. Adveka plans to pursue biomedical engineering, blending her passion for innovation with her dedication to helping entrepreneurs? Take risks!" others.

Jamie Jimenez (she/her), 13 Soberband, Los Angeles, CA



Soberband was created to prevent drunk driving and save lives. Inspired by her sister's experience witnessing a tragic accident caused by alcohol, Jamie wanted to develop a solution that would help people make safer choices. Soberband is a wristband that uses tissue spectroscopy to detect blood alcohol levels by shining light through the skin. If the wearer's BAC is over the legal limit, the wristband sends a signal to their vehicle app to prevent it from starting. By combining innovative technology with a

life-saving mission, Soberband empowers individuals to take responsibility for "Surround yourself with people their actions and protect their communities. Jamie is also a dedicated soccer who motivate you and push you to player and believes, "Success starts with leading others in the right direction keep going. It's important to have and that's what Soberband aims for."

Laela Gaines (she/her), 16 **STEM Box STL, Florissant, MO**



Laela Gaines is the co-founder of STEM Box STL, a company dedicated to making STEM education engaging, accessible, and affordable for all students. Recognizing the lack of resources in many schools, particularly in underserved communities, Laela created reusable STEM kits and community-driven programs to help students stay motivated, inspired, and hands-on with science and technology. STEM Box STL offers subscription services and curriculum packages, ensuring families and schools have consistent access to high-quality STEM experiences. Beyond her business, Laela

teaches STEM to young children and serves as an ambassador for the Saint Louis Science Center's Youth Exploring Science Program. A first-place winner at the Lindberg Flight Camp, she plans to pursue biology and medicine at Washington University in St. Louis.

New to NFTE? Choose a business

Cameron Marshall (he/him), 18 Street Cents, Jacksonville, FL



Cameron Marshall is the founder of Street Cents, a program that empowers youth through financial literacy, entrepreneurship, and career readiness workshops. Street Cents equips students—especially in underserved communities—with practical skills like budgeting, credit building, investing, and professionalism, preparing them for success beyond the classroom. Unlike traditional programs, Street Cents uses peer-led workshops, real-world scenarios, and mentorship from local professionals to make learning interactive and relatable. Cameron wrote and published his first

book, Street Cents, at 16 to share financial and business lessons with his peers. His long-term goal is to expand the program nationwide, helping students build generational wealth and stronger communities. Beyond entrepreneurship, Cameron is passionate about mentoring, public speaking, and inspiring young people to turn dreams into impact.

Ahmed "Top" Matan (he/him), 17 Stride Secure, Columbus, OH



Top Matan founded Stride Secure after experiencing a season-ending track injury caused by shin splints. Instead of relying on temporary fixes like stretches or physical therapy alone, Stride Secure designs running shoes and spikes tailored to each athlete's unique foot structure, providing year-round support and recovery both on and off the track. By addressing the root cause of shin splints, the business helps athletes stay healthy, confident, and competitive. Top's mission is also rooted in equity-Stride Secure aims to make its products accessible to lower-

income athletes by working with insurance and healthcare plans. Inspired by his own setback, Top is determined to create a solution that prevents others from losing valuable time on the track. He plans to study medicine and become a therapist while continuing his entrepreneurial journey.

you need. Trust in your gut the whole way through!"

Madeleine DeFilippo (she/her), 18, and Mikayla Schmidt (she/her), 17 StudyBuddies, Palm Beach Gardens, FL



StudyBuddies was created to address the lack of educational readiness in younger grades. While volunteering at a local elementary school, Mikayla and Madeleine noticed a disconnect between the curriculum and what students actually knew. StudyBuddies provides an educational subscription box filled with resources and materials designed to support learning at three developmental stages, helping students build confidence and strengthen their knowledge. The program empowers young learners

to develop a strong foundation, preparing them for future academic success. "Keep a strong mindset. Obstacles Beyond working on their business, Mikayla and Madeleine are actively involved in their school community, hold positions in the National Honor Society, will get you the farthest! Know National Science Honor Society, and National English Honor Society, and are yourself and trust your instincts!" four-year varsity soccer players.

Payton Garner (she/her), 18 The Essential Cube, Bunnell, FL



Payton Garner created The Essential Cube to make moving into college dorms less stressful, expensive, and time-consuming for first-year students. After experiencing the overwhelming process of balancing high school, preparing for college, and shopping for countless dorm necessities, Payton wanted a solution that would give students more time to focus on what matters most. The Essential Cube offers curated, all-in-one dorm kits with the most needed and often-forgotten essentials, saving students money and stress while letting families enjoy the excitement of

this transition. Beyond business, Payton plans to start nonprofits that provide kits to students and donate to community programs. She will study Business Administration at Santa Fe College before pursuing a master's in Mathematics something great." to fulfill her dream of becoming both an entrepreneur and teacher.

way of your success! All it takes

Timothy Edwards, Jr. (he/him), 17 U-Do Auto Repairs, Chicago, IL



U Do Auto Repairs provides a unique alternative in the auto repair industry, giving customers the tools and space to work on their own vehicles. Growing up in Chicago fixing cars, Timothy developed a passion for sharing his mechanical knowledge and helping others save money on costly mechanic fees. His business allows individuals to rent fully equipped workstations, empowering them to learn hands-on skills while maintaining their vehicles safely and efficiently. By offering an option that no other shop currently provides, U Do Auto Repairs fosters

independence, education, and affordability for car owners. Proudly from "Don't worry about failing-push Chicago and a student at Whitney Young Magnet High School, Timothy your idea out there to anyone who combines his love for automobiles with entrepreneurship to make car will listen." maintenance accessible and empowering for his community.

Kassidy Muldrew (she/her), 16 You Can Be! Dolls, Flint, MI



Kassidy Muldrew founded You Can Be! Dolls to challenge traditional stereotypes and inspire girls to pursue STEM careers. Each doll comes with its own science experiment, helping young girls see themselves as future engineers, scientists, and innovators. The idea was sparked when Kassidy joined her school's robotics team as a freshman and realized that none of the other girls in her grade participated. She saw how many of her peers doubted their abilities and wanted to create

a way to show them that they can succeed in STEM.

By encouraging curiosity and confidence, You Can Be! Dolls empowers girls to value their minds, not just appearances. Kassidy plans to study aerospace engineering at the University of Michigan, with dreams of one day working at NASA.

positively affect your community

Regional Teams & Board Leaders

NFTE CAPITAL REGION

Meg Stewart, Executive Director Carolyn Meadors, Program Manager

NFTE MID-ATLANTIC REGION

Robert Piercey, Program Director Mary Wang, Lead Program Associate

Noelle Calautti, EY (Board Co-Chair) Adam VeVerka, NewSpring (Board Co-Chair) Scott Snyder, EVERSANA (Board Vice Chair)

NFTE MIDWEST REGION

Scott Nasatir, Executive Director Lauren Patrick, Program Manager Deandre Allen, Lead Program Associate

Pramit Mehta, EY (Board Chair)

NFTE NEW ENGLAND REGION

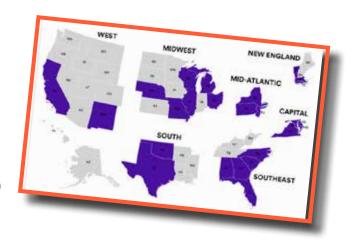
Jennifer Green, Sr. Manager, Programs

Vasant Narayan, The GATO Marketplace (Board Chair)

NFTE SOUTH REGION

Jennifer Lunt, Program Director

Meshell Baker, Meshell Baker Enterprises, LLC (Board Chair)



NFTE SOUTHEAST REGION

Chris Brignolle, Sr. Executive Director and Regional Support Daniel Wiliams, Program Director Victor Martinez, Program Manager Timothy Jean, Lead Program Associate

Cesar Ramos, Morgan Stanley Wealth Management, (Board Chair)

NFTE WEST REGION

Emma Hunt, Program Director Cristopher Bautista, Program Manager

Gary Rabishaw, Intrepid Investment Bankers (Board Chair)

Volunteers of the Year

Integral to the success of NFTE classroom programming are the generous time and talent offered by our volunteers. Volunteer speakers share their entrepreneurial journeys and insights in the classroom; coaches work one-on-one to support students' work on business plans; field trip hosts demonstrate real-life businesses in action; and judges provide important feedback at competitions.

Each of the volunteers selected by the NFTE regions displays an ongoing dedication to NFTE's mission to make a difference in the lives of our students.

The national Individual Volunteerism Award recognizes one volunteer who has developed innovative ways to support NFTE and its students. The award recipient serves as a powerful example of how business leaders can impact the lives and futures of young people learning to engage their entrepreneurial mindsets.

2025 Individual Volunteer of the Year

Kristoffer Kizer, CPI®, ASBC®
Midwest Region
Modern Exit Advisor, Unbroker
Investment Principal, Iron Key Capital

Kristoffer Kizer has been an invaluable volunteer with NFTE for over four years, contributing significantly to the advancement of NFTE's mission to empower young entrepreneurs. As a business plan coach, mentor, and judge, Kristoffer has directly impacted the success and growth of countless NFTE students. His expertise and dedication have helped students develop solid



business plans, prepare for pitch competitions, and hone their entrepreneurial skills.

Kristoffer's commitment to NFTE goes beyond individual mentorship. He has been a key participant in NFTE Midwest's Guest Speaker Series, sharing his experiences and insights with students, teachers, and alumni. Furthermore, his work with the national team as a Founders Forum coach demonstrates his leadership and passion for shaping the next generation of entrepreneurs.

Individual Volunteer of the Year Regional Finalists, 2025

Capital Region

Matt Aaron, LUX Wealth Planning

Matt has been a committed member of the NFTE Capital Region Board since 2022. He is deeply aligned with NFTE's mission and is particularly passionate about empowering youth from underserved communities by equipping them with essential financial skills that pave the way for future success. Matt has generously volunteered his time as a guest speaker and judge for NFTE students throughout the Capital region. As a board member, he has worked diligently to expand support for NFTE's programs, organizing two fundraising events and actively recruiting volunteers to engage with students.

Mid-Atlantic Region

Marsha Corelien, Spontaneous Braid Creations and MCorelien Corporation

Marsha has been an integral part of NFTE since taking the program as a student, and has only grown in recent years in the Mid-Atlantic region. As a senior leader at Valley National Bank, Marsha's committed and continued efforts made it possible for NFTE to begin receiving not only funding but also access to the Valley team as volunteers throughout the region. She recently judged for both NFTE's World Series of Innovation and the Mid-Atlantic Regional Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge. She has also served as a business plan and career readiness coach during the region's Youth Entrepreneurship Summit events. In addition to a long list of professional experience, Marsha has recently launched her own HR consulting business.

New England Region

Blake Underhill, Industrial Safety & Rescue

Since 2011, Blake has volunteered almost 50 times with NFTE as a guest speaker, coach, advisor and judge, serving more than 115 hours and engaged with NFTE students in nearly every region. In addition, Blake has been a guest speaker for NFTE's Mindset Makers series for our NFTE teachers: empowering them with real-world examples and tips from his own experience. Blake is always willing to share his educational + professional journey with our NFTE students, so they can learn from his failures, successes, and "aha" moments. Blake loves learning about and coaching NFTE learners toward their career or educational aspirations. He is authentic, relatable, and an inspiration to all our NFTE students. Consequently, he has become one of those "go-to" people to whom we reach out when we are in need of strong volunteers for any session.

South Region

Meshell Baker, Meshell Baker Enterprises, LLC

Meshell Baker has quickly woven herself into the tapestry that is NFTE South. Chief Confidence Igniter with Meshell Baker Enterprises, LLC, she first volunteered at Youth Entrepreneurship Summit (YES) events in 2023 and has been a constant and consistent source of support. Meshell has coached students, mentored student entrepreneurs, led workshops, and coached NFTE staff during all-staff meetings. In today's environment, consistently showing up (especially in person) is a rarity, but Meshell can always be counted on to not only show up but bring a million-watt smile and infectious personality. She inspires those around her to be their best self and is always there to lend her time and tremendous talents to help make that a reality for all she encounters. Meshell is the new South Board Chair, and NFTE South is excited to see what she brings in the coming years!

Volunteer of the Year (cont'd.)

Southeast Region

Alan Alvarez, Miami Bayside Foundation

Alan has been a dedicated and passionate member of the NFTE community for 10 years, contributing over 300 hours of volunteer service to NFTE programs across South Florida. He has brought the "secret sauce" of NFTE to life as a business plan coach, advisor, and competition judge, and thanks to his recruitment efforts, over 50 new volunteers have joined us and continue to serve and support our mission today. This year, Alan co-chaired the NFTE Southeast Advisory Board's Volunteer Committee, expanding NFTE's volunteer reach into Central Florida and enhancing volunteer appreciation initiatives and fundraising efforts. Beyond his work with NFTE, Alan is deeply engaged in his local entrepreneurial community. Through the Miami Bayside Foundation's Small Business Training program, he mentors and supports local small business owners, and he hopes to involve NFTE students and alumni in this program as their businesses grow. Alan exemplifies what it means to lead with purpose and give back with heart, and NFTE is proud to honor him and his commitment to youth entrepreneurship education. Thank you, Alan!

West Region

Chris Boyd, Wilson Sonsini Goodrich & Rosati

For more than 15 years, Chris has been a tireless and enthusiastic champion for NFTE West. Not only has he served as an involved Advisory Board member, but he has personally committed to coaching our finalists and hosting field trips for our students. He took students under his wing and truly committed to their individual growth and success. As a board member, he leads by example and is an invaluable member of our team.

JOIN NFTE'S VOLUNTEER COMMUNITY! CLICK HERE TO REGISTER.



Corporate Volunteer of the Year

A key component of NFTE's programming is the involvement of local volunteers who create bridges from classroom learning to real world application, helping students build their personal and professional networks. This year we honor Valley National Bank for their commitment to NFTE students and teachers.

Valley National Bank has been an exceptional partner in advancing NFTE's mission through a deep commitment to volunteerism and strategic engagement across multiple programs and regions. Over the past year alone, 93 Valley employees contributed an impressive 224 volunteer hours demonstrating not only the breadth of their support, but also the depth of their dedication to our students and educators. Their volunteers have shown up for NFTE's Global Day of Coaching in NYC, served as judges at the Regional, National, and World Youth Entrepreneurship Challenge series, coached at school sites across the Mid-Atlantic, supported our NYC Summer BizCamp, and contributed to our Founders Forum and Youth Entrepreneurship Summit.

Valley National Bank's sustained, multi-regional support and dedication to student success through hands-on involvement make them a clear standout among our industry partners. Their continued investment of time, talent, and leadership truly exemplifies what this award is all about.





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